



# **Fightback**

*Struggle, Solidarity, Socialism*

MARCH 2017

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RIGHT TO  
THE CITY

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## 10 POINT PROGRAMME

Fightback stands for the following core programme, and for building institutions of grassroots power in the working class and oppressed groups to bring them about:

1. Constitutional transformation based on Tino Rangatiratanga, Mana Motuhake and workers power. Tangata whenua and community co-ops to operate as kaitiaki over public resources.
2. Secure, appropriate and meaningful work for those who want it, with a shorter working week. The benefit system to be replaced with a Universal Basic Income.
3. International working class solidarity. Open borders, full rights for migrant workers. Recognition of Pasefika rights to self-determination. Opposition to all imperialist intervention and alliances, including New Zealand state's participation in military occupations, 'free trade' agreements and surveillance agreements.
4. No revolution without women's liberation. Full funding for appropriate, community-driven abuse prevention and survivor support, free access to all reproductive technologies, public responsibility for childcare and other reproductive work. The right to full, safe expression of sexuality and gender identity.
5. An ecosocialist solution to climate change. End fossil fuel extraction, expand green technology and public transport, and radically restructure industrial food production.
6. Freedom of information. End corporate copyright policies in favour of creative commons. Public support for all media technologies, expansion of affordable broadband internet to the whole country. An end to government spying.
7. Abolish prisons, replace with restorative justice and rehabilitation.
8. Universal right to housing. Expansion of high-density, high-quality public housing, strict price controls on privately owned houses. Targeted support to end involuntary homelessness.
9. Fully-funded healthcare at every level. Move towards health system based on informed consent, remove inequities in accident compensation, opposition to "top-down" efforts to change working people's behaviour.
10. Fully-funded education at every level, run by staff and students. Funding for all forms of education and research, enshrining kaupapa Maori approaches.



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# Editorial

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The growth of cities as the dominant social and economic form of human life on the planet is a distinguishing feature of the capitalist era. Before capitalism, cities were trading posts and places where the rich spent their wealth; but most wealth was produced in the fields, forests and mines of rural areas. This all changed with the Industrial Revolution in the new factory cities where wealth was produced as well as spent. Later, as industrial production shifted globally to the rising Asian economies since World War II, the older developed countries shifted to “post-industrial” (information and knowledge-based) forms of production. Importantly, despite predictions that this would lead to a new de-centralisation, it’s been shown that information and technology workers produce more (and are happier) living, working and playing together in dense cities, rather than the isolated suburbs which sprang up during the cheap-oil eras.

All this just goes to show that cities aren’t going anywhere, despite some of the fond dreams of “back to the land”-ers, or the dreamers of suburban utopia. As long as big cities are where society’s wealth is produced, so (following Karl Marx’s political economy) that’s where the possibility of social revolution is to be found. Additionally, in the globalised era, the big cities are where the migrant workers and the refugees from war, poverty and climate change gather, interact with local workers, and thereby create a new global culture. Contrary to the reactionary musings of the “conservative left”, this cross-cultural intersection brings power and strength to the workers’ movement – if only that movement knows how to organise itself.

As Daphne Lawless pointed out in her 2015 article for *Fightback* – reprinted first up in this issue – big cities may (perhaps counter-intuitively) be our only feasible solution to the global climate crisis, as urban living (planned properly for need rather than greed) offers the cleanest and most efficient use of resources for both housing and transportation. Tāne Feary develops this idea further with his discussion of eco-cities and Transition Towns.

Aotearoa / New Zealand has no equivalent to the sprawling megacities to be found overseas. But we do have Tāmaki Makarau / Auckland, population 1.5 million and rising. So this edition of *Fightback* on the Right to the City makes no apology for concentrating on the “City of Sails”. We are privileged to run an extended piece from

TransportBlog’s Peter Nunns, in which he uses facts and figures to explain in detail precisely what kind of urban development a sustainable and liveable Auckland would need. Of course, the housing and public transport issues run together. We feature a piece from veteran South Auckland campaigner Roger Fowler arguing that zero fares (free public transport) is the revolutionary step that Auckland needs – with a few counter-arguments from TransportBlog’s Patrick Reynolds, to set us thinking.

Of course, development can never be thought of in the abstract. The current leadership of our city – with Phil Goff carrying on the general approach of his predecessor as Mayor, Len Brown – pays lip-service to bringing all Aucklanders along with the development of our new global city. But this has not been the history of what has happened in Auckland, where time and again the working classes (in particular the tangata whenua, as well as Pasefika and other migrant groups) have been made to pay for the dreams of their social betters. Daphne Lawless explains the intertwined history of Auckland’s “motorway madness” and the gentrification of the inner suburbs, which created an asset-rich Pākehā layer at the expense (in more ways than one) of Pasefika lives, and actually created today’s permanent gridlock. Two other writers expand on how this process is still going on, with Vanessa Day talking about the fight against dispossession by gentrification in Glen Innes, and Bronwen Beechey adding updates from Avondale, which could well become the Grey Lynn of the 21st century.

Turning to the rest of the country, Byron Clark lets us know about the wasted opportunities in Ōtautahi / Christchurch, where the post-earthquake rebuild has led to the same old suburban sprawl and petrol-driven traffic chaos. Patricia Hall contributes an eloquent plea for the cities of the future to be truly accessible – just as fighting racial and gender inequality benefits all working people, she argues, so fighting for accessibility is not just for the benefit of the physically or mentally impaired.

Finally, Ani White looks back on a documentary from the 1975 Māori Land March, concentrating on the alliances between urban and rural tangata whenua that made it happen. With “back to the land” mythology still strong in the tino rangatiratanga movement, this is a timely reminder that the power of indigenous people in the globalised era lies in the cities as well. ■





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# Contributors

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# Urban Housing is an Ecosocialist Issue

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Daphne Lawless *Reprinted from Fightback March 2015*

It's obvious that there is a great shortage of quality, affordable housing in Aotearoa. Or to be more precise, there's a shortage in those places where people want to live. There are regular stories about houses going on TradeMe for a few hundred dollars, in places like Balclutha or other isolated rural zones.

Rural houses are great for people who can support themselves in a rural lifestyle, like farm workers or independent writers or artists. But the facts of life in a modern economy are that most of the economic growth, and therefore new jobs and opportunities, will happen in the cities – Auckland in particular, but Wellington, Christchurch and Hamilton as well. Because Auckland is where I live and expect to raise my family, it's that town which I will concentrate on in this article.

## Explosive growth

Auckland's explosive growth to near 1.5 million inhabitants is also exacerbated, not only by its milder climate compared to our other urban centres, but by immigration. New settlers in our country prefer to live near to people who share their culture, hence Auckland's massively high levels of cultural diversity compared to the rest of the

country. Whether Pasefika peoples in Mangere, people from Chinese cultures in Botany or people from the Indian subcontinent in Sandringham, Auckland's cultural mosaic gets more complicated and colourful all the time.

But Auckland's expanding population needs somewhere to live. The latest survey [in 2015 –Ed.] shows that the median house price in Auckland has passed \$670,000 – almost 15 times the median yearly income. Historically, that ratio has been stable at around 4. So, a house in Auckland costs almost 4 times as much as it should.

The media blame this on "a shortage of new housing", mainly blaming Auckland Council's planning tools, like the Metropolitan Urban Limit – refusing to rezone rural areas bordering the city for new housing. But this is unfair, and pushes a political ideology which is both anti-worker, and anti-green.

One of the main problems of neoliberal capitalism is that, when wages are pushed down, workers can't buy things and the economy slows. One of the solutions – in virtually every advanced country in the world – has been to semi-deliberately create a housing bubble. Loans for buying houses have become

cheap and plentiful, pushing up prices. And when house prices go up, those who already own houses (the middle and upper classes) benefit. They can buy cars or go on holidays and "put it on the mortgage".

But even capitalist economics understands what happens when you just pump more money into a market – prices go up overall. The longer the bubble goes on, the less hope for the people at the bottom of the "housing ladder". A similar thing happens in the rental market with WINZ giving out the Accommodation Supplement, a rent subsidy for those on low-to-average incomes. This money just goes to boost the landlord's profits, and rents rise to match.

## Pricking the bubble

The housing bubble is therefore just another way of transferring wealth from the property-less to the property-owners. But even our bosses are getting nervous that we could end up in a situation like the United States or Ireland, where after the bubble burst, entire neighbourhoods became vacant after their mortgages were foreclosed on. Hence, the Reserve Bank has recently cut the availability of loans for new home-owners (once again punishing the needy to safeguard the gains of the greedy).



So what's a pro-worker, pro-environment solution to the housing crisis? A bursting housing bubble might bring prices down, but would also cause massive economic recession. The right-wing media and the National Government want us to think that the answer is building new housing zones on the fringes of the urban area at "affordable prices".

Let's go through all the ways that this kind of urban sprawl is ecological and economic bad news:

- New fringe suburbs encroach onto fertile farming land. Some of Auckland's best volcanic soils (such as the market gardens in Avondale) have long since been built over. Pushing development towards Pukekohe would put the food sustainability of the region under severe pressure.
- New developments require brand new services such as telephone, stormwater and electricity to be built, at a high cost.
- In New Zealand, new housing areas are generally built without any thought as to public transport – and generally nowhere near workplaces. Not only does this require that everyone who lives there must own a car, but they are forced to commute for stupid distances across our already-clogged motorway network, turning expensive fossil fuels into air pollution as they do so.

The National Government's "special housing areas", such as Hobsonville Point, Flat Bush or Hingaia, are nowhere near the recently upgraded electric train services, and will all need new bus or ferry services to make it possible to live there without a car. This isn't

solving the housing crisis – just opening it up to developers to profit from.

## Up, not out

The alternative – as many insightful commenters on Auckland's housing issues have identified, for example, the Generation Zero pressure group – is for Auckland to grow up, not out. That is, new affordable, high-density (flat or apartment) housing should be built in and around the Central City and central suburbs. Amazingly enough, it's only been legal to build apartments in the Auckland CBD since 1995, and since then its population has grown to 47,000 [as of 2017 –Ed.] – the same size as a smaller New Zealand city such as Upper Hutt. Also, with a large population of students and creative types, it's generally a lower-income and more culturally diverse population than the ultra-rich inner 'burbs like Remuera or Herne Bay.

The rich absolutely hate this idea. The working-class population of central Auckland were systematically moved out between the 1950s and 1970s, when "slums" like Freemans Bay and Newton were gutted to build the Central Motorway Junction, and surrounding suburbs like Ponsonby or Grey Lynn were gentrified.

The old working-men's cottages of Auckland's central fringe suburbs can now fetch more than \$1 million. The last thing that their privileged current owners want is for the price to be brought down by affordable apartments being built around the corner – or indeed, for working-class (or non-white) people to live in their area at all. They'd much prefer working people out of sight and out of mind, in the far-flung fringes. Which is of course precisely what happened to the inhabitants of "old" Ponsonby; Mangere or Otara were settled by refugees from "slum clearances" and motorway madness around the CBD.

[For more on this part of Auckland's urban history, see Daphne's article "Economic apartheid" in this issue.]

Housing and transport are both aspects of the same question, as is access to public services. The under-construction City Rail Link, an underground railway connecting the CBD to the Western rail line, will greatly increase the efficiency of public transport. Auckland's inner-suburb privileged class, though, see this as part and parcel of intensified housing, and their representatives on Council have tried to sabotage it at every turn. Making urban life in Auckland more accessible, affordable and vibrant is the last thing that the ultra-exclusive, financially-segregated communities of the city fringe want.

## Anti-urbanism

Studying the facts, it becomes clear that to improve quality of life in Auckland, to reduce social inequalities and make life richer and more affordable for working people, the affordable as well as the green solution is centralisation and intensification combined with much better public transport. However, many who see themselves on the liberal side or even the Left of politics wouldn't agree.

When I interviewed MANA co-vice-president John Minto in this paper in 2013, when he was running for Mayor of Auckland, he had this to say:

"They're replacing existing state housing with 8-story slums in the town centre. We've seen this happen overseas – they'll be rubbish-quality... Families need wide spaces to grow up in – they're not going to grow up on the sixth floor of an apartment building."

There is absolutely no reason why – excluding the greed of developers and the ignorance of planners – high-density living should become a "slum"

nightmare like an English “estate” or a French “cité”. All that is required is people-centred and eco-friendly planning. Attention to green space, sustainable transport links, and integration to the broader culture of the city can prevent affordable housing becoming a shunned slum.

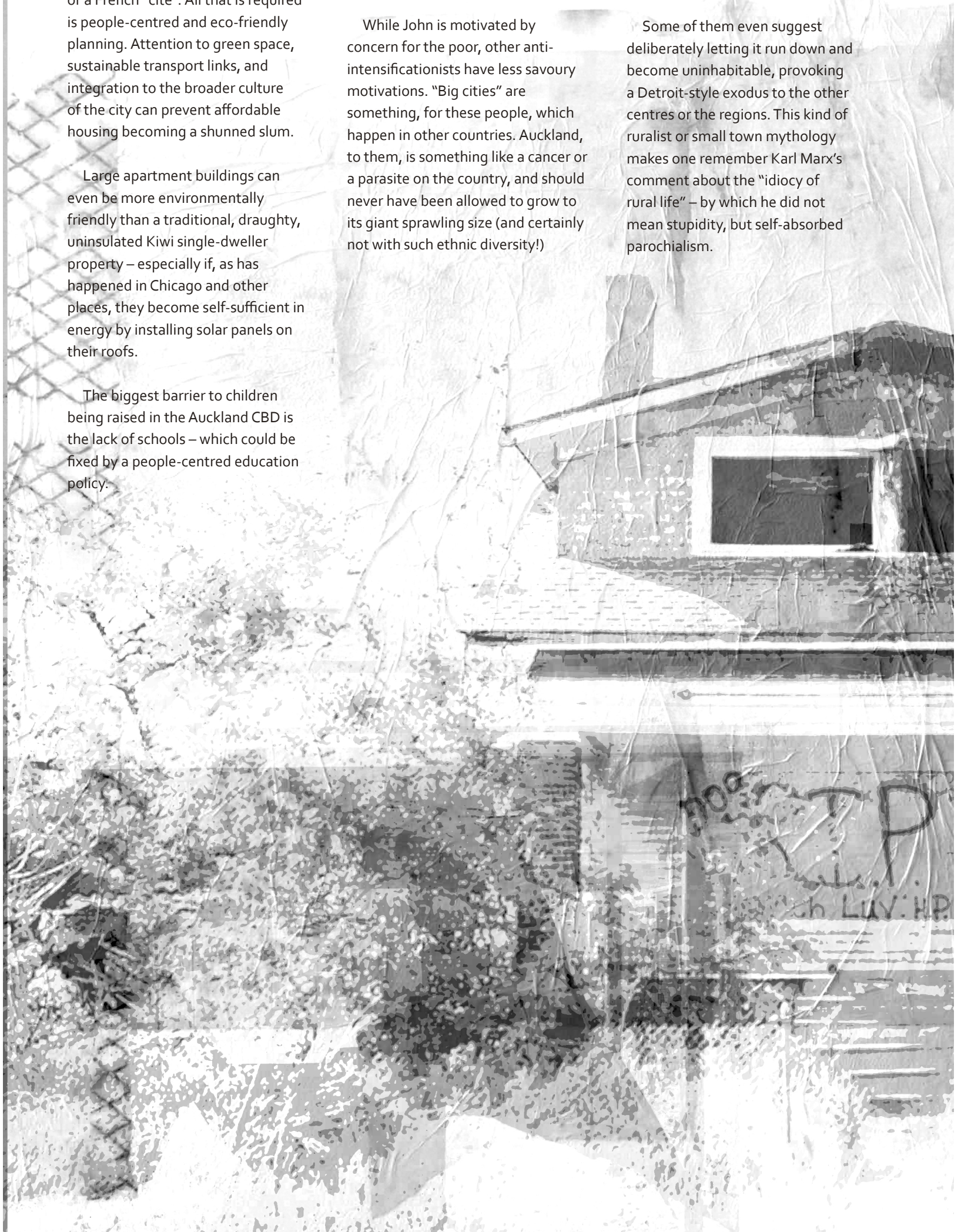
Large apartment buildings can even be more environmentally friendly than a traditional, draughty, uninsulated Kiwi single-dweller property – especially if, as has happened in Chicago and other places, they become self-sufficient in energy by installing solar panels on their roofs.

The biggest barrier to children being raised in the Auckland CBD is the lack of schools – which could be fixed by a people-centred education policy.

## Detroit

While John is motivated by concern for the poor, other anti-intensificationists have less savoury motivations. “Big cities” are something, for these people, which happen in other countries. Auckland, to them, is something like a cancer or a parasite on the country, and should never have been allowed to grow to its giant sprawling size (and certainly not with such ethnic diversity!)

Some of them even suggest deliberately letting it run down and become uninhabitable, provoking a Detroit-style exodus to the other centres or the regions. This kind of ruralist or small town mythology makes one remember Karl Marx’s comment about the “idiocy of rural life” – by which he did not mean stupidity, but self-absorbed parochialism.





Ecosocialism concentrates on quality of life as well as income for working people.

"Agglomeration benefits" – the economic, cultural and environmental benefits of concentrating and enhancing the central areas of large cities – are very real. Although some will always prefer a suburban big back-yard lifestyle, the cultural benefits of living in a teeming, vibrant, culturally rich community should be open to all working people

of Aotearoa/New Zealand. This is the future that the "Remuera brigade" (the equivalents would be Thorndon or Fendalton in other cities) hate and fear.

When they "cleared" Freeman's Bay and Newton in the 1960s, they told the working-class and Pasifika residents that they'd never miss their old "slums" in their brand-new houses in far-away Mangere and Otara. We can see how that turned out –

economic apartheid, auto-dependent isolation, and a downward spiralling local economy leading to crime.

It's time to put an end to economic apartheid, and bring working people back into the centre of our urban life and culture – where they belong. The only way we can all fit sustainably is by growing our cities upwards. ■



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# Eco-villages, transition towns and garden cities

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Tāne Feary

This article introduces the Transition Towns movement and looks at eco-villages, exploring some possibilities for the future. The focus is on cities, and our increasingly urban existence.

## Transition

The Transition Towns concept originated in Totnes, UK. Since the first project in 2006, Transition Initiatives have spread to multiple countries and countless regions around the world: Oamaru, Grey Lynn, Sydney, the United States, and the list goes on. These projects can be carried out on a small or large scale, and include villages, regions, islands, towns or cities.

Transition Towns are set up to address two challenges: peak oil and climate change. Modern Industrial capitalism uses vast amounts of fossil fuels; oil is the lifeblood of the modern industrial economy. Peak oil is not new. But it is not an issue that gets a lot of attention. NZ had oil shocks in the 70s, when we had carless days; but we are not prepared for a future of carless cities.

What would happen if the oil stopped flowing? No food in supermarkets, no cars, no flights. No gas to cook dinner. Power? Shops?

Airports? Petrol stations? What else?

Transition Towns has been working on the local scale. But work is also being done on a larger scale – for example, Sweden has declared it will be a fossil fuel-free nation. Fossil fuel-free cities are also being discussed. The Transition Towns concept may not have translated to places like China, but other approaches are being tried.

## Eco-cities

Ecological civilization is a term that is not new, but is now getting backing at senior levels. Growth is no longer the only mantra in China. Eco-cities are also being developed in China, such as Tianjin Eco-city.

Peak oil is an issue for cities. Smog is an issue. Food security is an issue. Most cities import a lot of food.

Clean water is a must. Extracting fossil fuels can be very destructive, and then there is the issue of waste. Put simply, cities face a lot of challenges. Some cities have been in decline. Detroit is not unique.

More extraction. More burning of fossil fuels. More mines. More Standing Rocks, more vulnerable island nations. More of the same will yield more of the same results. What does a different approach look like?

Transition Towns explores what a transition away from fossil fuels looks like. Permaculture is another concept that offers answers. Permaculture is a term that was devised and developed by Bill Mollison and David Holmgren. (See the website link at the bottom of the article to learn more about permaculture in NZ). Permaculture doesn't need to be a rural activity. Urban farming is a modern form of permaculture.

In New Zealand, a village was designed with transition values in mind. Will it work? This particular village in the South Island has so far fallen into debt and has been highly problematic. Many of the commune projects from the "back to the land" phase some people went through in NZ no longer exist. Many people in NZ, however, maintain connections to the land. Community gardens are thriving in NZ. Setting them up is easy, but keeping them going requires another set of skills. "Back to the land" was followed by back to the city. People shift to the cities to find jobs. This is not unique to NZ.

Perhaps what was lacking most in many of these recent and not so recent experiments was community.

Many people don't have farming backgrounds. Other skills were also lacking. That explains some of



the mistakes made when people attempted to set up communities in the countryside. Isolation was also an issue. This can be avoided by placing farms in cities. Golf courses could be put to other uses. Lawns or grass verges can be replaced with productive gardens. Placing food production closer to dense populations reduces travel time. Gardens in schools is another way permaculture can be applied in cities. Roof top gardens, vertical gardens... a design rethink opens up vast possibilities. Wellington City has a small productive urban farm placed right next door to its hospital.

Cities are growing. Emissions are growing. More people, more cars. More smog, more pollution. Some blame people, population, migration. I don't see immigration as a problem. The struggle for a just transition away from fossil fuels includes the struggle against borders which lock people into appalling conditions – increasingly, as a result of climate change. As climate change worsens, migration will increase. If we are to live in cities in large numbers, we need to learn to live well. Cities need to create less waste and generate more energy. Tomorrow's cities don't have to use vast amounts of resources and fill up endless landfills, exploiting and despoiling. Cities don't have to be coal powered. The eco-city approach offers ways to reduce energy use and create more closed systems inside the cities. When this happens, the city is not a drain on the countryside or a health hazard for its residents.

## Food security

In New Zealand, a lot of food is imported and exported. New Zealand traditionally had a lot of farms and exported a lot of dairy products. It still does. This is being done by irrigation and intensive farming.

The current mantra is: The more stock the better. Large volumes, large profits. The downside is large volumes of effluent. Of course, our cities also

produce large volumes of effluent. On the small scale, composting is a solution when it comes to food waste. Large scale solutions also need to exist, since large scale problems exist. The conservative government of New Zealand has been trying to push a model that is focused on short term profits: cut down forests, export logs. Blow up mountains, export coal. Pollute rivers, export milk powder. Then there is the motorway mania. Air quality suffers, water quality suffers, and over time - quality of life too.

Some cities are starting to address the issue of food security. Urban farming and community gardening is taking off. Old vacant parking lots of unused land can be put to new uses. Detroit, the poster city for urban decline, is also the poster city for urban farming. Mass migration to the countryside is not on the cards. Urban renewal is a more realistic response to challenges facing urban populations. Eco-villages don't have to be located far from population clusters. What would an eco-village in the heart of a city look like? Closer to home lessons can also be learned from Christchurch Garden City. A city with a thriving grassroots spirit; a city with a future.

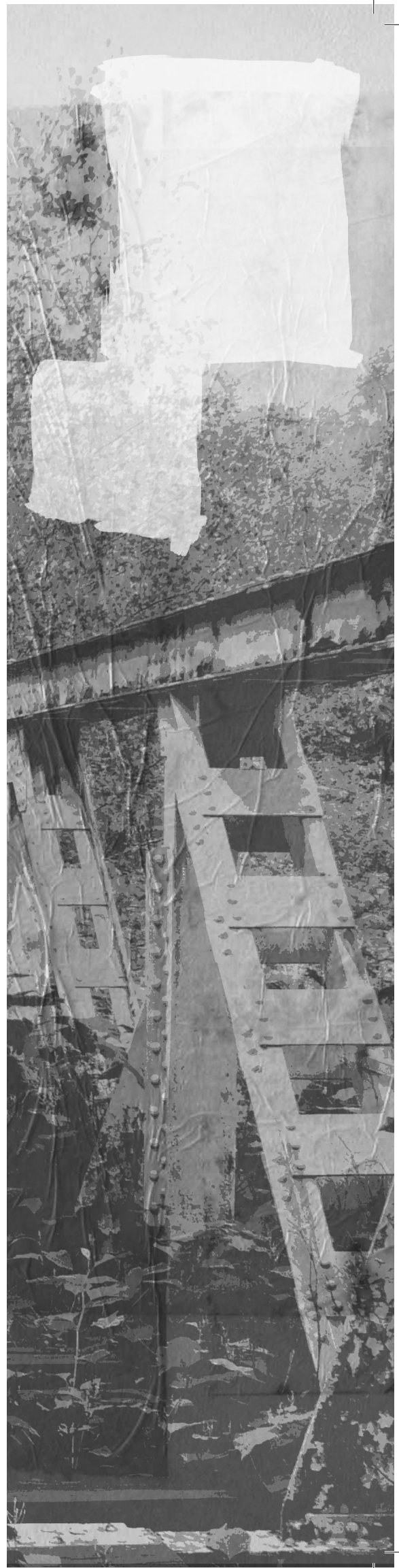
An ecocentric approach as opposed to a capitalistic development model is one that explores permaculture land management and design, Eco-city urbanism and expands on the Transition Towns concept. Can cities have fresh air? Quiet spaces, clean water and clean air? What kind of city do you want to live in? ■

### For more information:

<http://transitionnetwork.org/>

<http://www.transitiontowns.org.nz/>

<https://permaculture.org.nz>





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# Build bridges, not walls: How to make Auckland a more equitable city

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Peter Nunns

As an economist specialising in urban issues, I spend most of my time analysing and debating how transport and housing policy can make society wealthier, healthier, and happier. But it's important to keep equity, exclusion, and politics in view as well: When the average person's fortunes rise, is everybody better off, or are some people left behind? And if some people feel excluded from society's good fortune, will they react by building up an alternative, or by tearing down what's already there?

In this article, I want to step back from purely economic concerns and ask how we can build a city that is more equitable and inclusive, rather than simply more efficient. However, in saying this, I don't want to give the impression that we must sacrifice economic outcomes to improve equity, or vice versa. On the contrary, many of the housing and transport policies that will benefit us economically will *also* contribute to a more equitable society.

## The problem of scarcity

Urban space is fundamentally limited. A person on a bike cannot occupy the same space as a truck – or, at least, it would be very unwise for them to try it. Two people cannot build houses on the same plot of land – unless they stack their homes and call it an apartment building. Consequently, access to many urban

amenities, like coastal views or convenient commutes to a range of jobs, are also limited to those with the right and the means to occupy desirable places.

In a market economy, access to these amenities is usually rationed by price. People with the ability to pay for a nice location get to enjoy living there, and others must go elsewhere. This isn't to say that non-market allocation systems will necessarily produce a fairer outcome. For instance, in the Soviet Union the best dachas, or holiday homes, were reserved for political and technical elites. However, it does suggest that, to get a more equitable outcome, we need to overcome the scarcity of housing in nice locations and the scarcity of good transport choices throughout the city.

Good urban policy *can* overcome scarcity. For instance, survey evidence shows that Aucklanders value their natural environment, including beaches, coasts, and public parks. However, a piece of research that I led last year found that home-buyers in Auckland pay substantially more to live near the coast but not to live near regional or local parks.

The difference is that coastal locations are in scarce supply, while parks are not. Because councils chose to build many neighbourhood parks and preserve major green spaces like the Waitakere Ranges and Maungawhau / Mt Eden, very few

homes are more than a kilometre from the nearest park. Because there are many parks, access to them doesn't have to be rationed by price.

## Capital accumulation and Auckland's housing affordability crisis

In *Limits to Capital*, geographer David Harvey observed that capital tends to seek a 'spatial fix' through investment in urban housing and infrastructure that promises a deferred (but potentially large) return. While we could debate aspects of Harvey's narrative, it is clear that house prices have experienced a structural increase in most places since the 1960s. This reflects increasing allocation of capital to housing, and in turn results in rising wealth inequality.

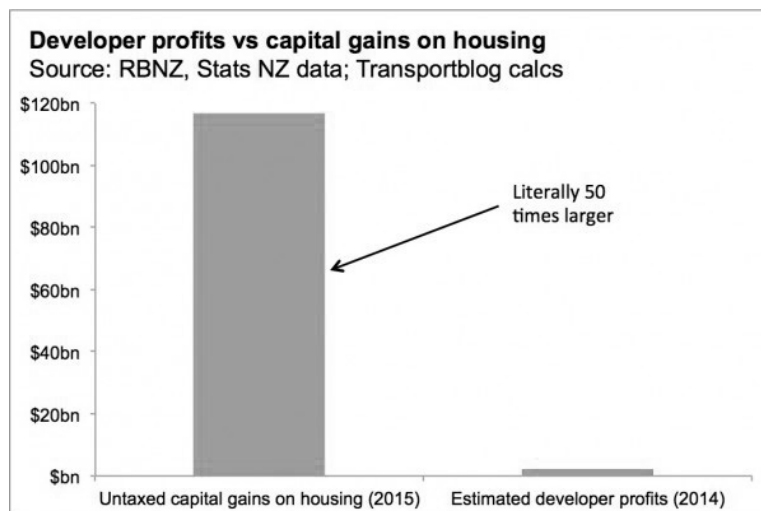
This is happening in Auckland, too. Capital has flowed into Auckland's housing market for a variety of reasons, including falling global interest rates and tax preferences for residential property investment. By and large, the money hasn't been put to work building new homes. Instead, it's bid up the price of existing housing. As Stu Donovan pointed out in an article on Transportblog<sup>1</sup>, we're living in a topsy-turvy world in which the best way to make money off housing isn't to develop it, but to own it and speculate on future price increases.

Rising house prices may be appealing in the short run, but in the long term they add up to a social catastrophe. For one thing, the benefits of rising prices aren't shared

bit further and discuss a few ways that current capital inflows can be put to work to overcome Auckland's problems of scarcity.

of a large ocean. But if we do things differently, we can house more people in the space and break our vicious cycle of housing speculation.

The first and most important step is to ensure that urban planning rules allow more housing to get built, in the right places. Some people have sought to build walls of rules around neighbourhoods or entire cities, to keep them from growing and changing. But there is another way to achieve good urban outcomes: planning rules that enable more to be done and ensure that what's done is done well, with good attention to the interface between buildings and the street and the long-run quality of neighbourhoods.



equitably, as home ownership is falling and wasn't evenly distributed to begin with. Effectively, rising house prices represent a transfer of wealth from young people to older home-owners and investment property owners. If this persists for generations, young people without inherited wealth may never catch up.

For another, rising prices compel people to do a range of undesirable things to economise on housing costs. For some, this means staying in overcrowded or unhealthy accommodation because there isn't anywhere else to go. As a result, Aucklanders suffer unnecessarily from preventable diseases like rheumatic fever and asthma. For other people, it may mean saving money to buy a home rather than starting a family or a business. You can see the effects of these pernicious trade-offs throughout society.

## Fixing Auckland's housing problems

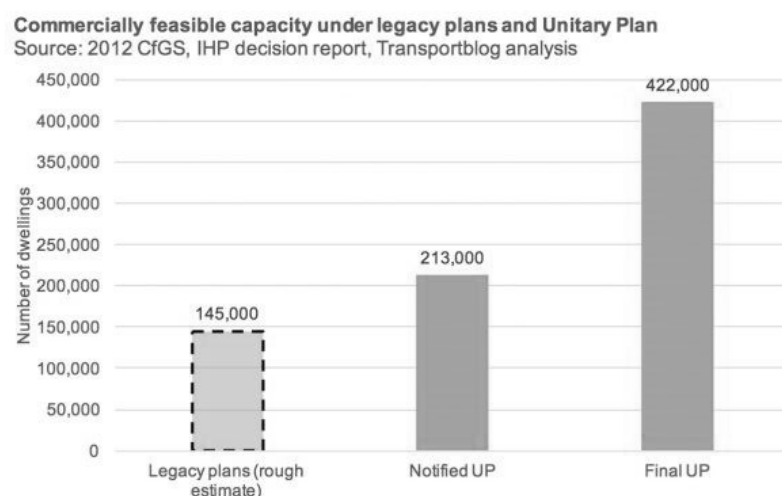
David Harvey also points out, in *The Right to the City*, that it is possible to enlist capital inflows to benefit society, rather than to benefit private speculators. He focuses on the role of taxation in reallocating capital, but I'd like to generalise the point a

As discussed above, when nice things are in scarce supply, prices tend to rise until some people give up and go elsewhere. We can see that effect clearly in the market for coastal property, but it's also very real for housing in Auckland *in general*. We don't have enough housing to meet the needs of the people who are living here, or who would want to live here. So prices have risen, which has induced a few people to leave, either to elsewhere in New Zealand or overseas, and forced others to cram into overcrowded or unsafe housing. Some people have no home at all.

Scarcity of housing in Auckland isn't immutable, like a physical law. It's true that *land* is scarce in Auckland, as the city sits on a few narrow strips of land in the middle

Design is important, but location is even more important. In Auckland, there are a number of amenities that are concentrated in a small number of locations. For instance, people value coastal living and they value the consumer amenities and good employment accessibility that are concentrated near the geographic centre of the region. Rules that limit new housing in these areas will result in an inequitable city, in which nice locations are the exclusive preserve of the well-off.

Auckland's urban planning rulebook has come a long way in recent years. As I wrote on Transportblog last year<sup>2</sup>, the final Unitary Plan has roughly tripled the number of homes that could be built in Auckland, which gives us room to





ease the housing shortfall.

With luck, this will change the property game in Auckland, tilting the incentives away from speculative investments (i.e. buying and holding for capital gains) and towards socially beneficial investments in new housing. But it may not be sufficient on its own, because private developers aren't going to *continue* to build homes if prices start dropping. The data on building consents and house prices makes it clear that they, too, are in a boom-bust cycle: When prices fall, or stop rising as rapidly, developers pull back the number of homes they build.

This is where state housing, a long-standing progressive solution to housing equity issues, can play a vital role. The government (or the council) doesn't necessarily need to build most of the new homes, or even more than a small share of them, to improve the fairness of the housing market. If it simply commits to stepping forward when private developers step back, it will help to stabilise boom-bust cycles in home construction. This will in turn ensure that the people at the bottom of the ladder don't fall *off* the ladder when the next boom comes around.

## Inequalities in Auckland's transport system

So far I've talked mainly about housing, but transport is the other

side of the urban equation. This, again, is an area where Auckland has a number of inequalities that could be addressed by redirecting a bit of the capital that's sloshing around.

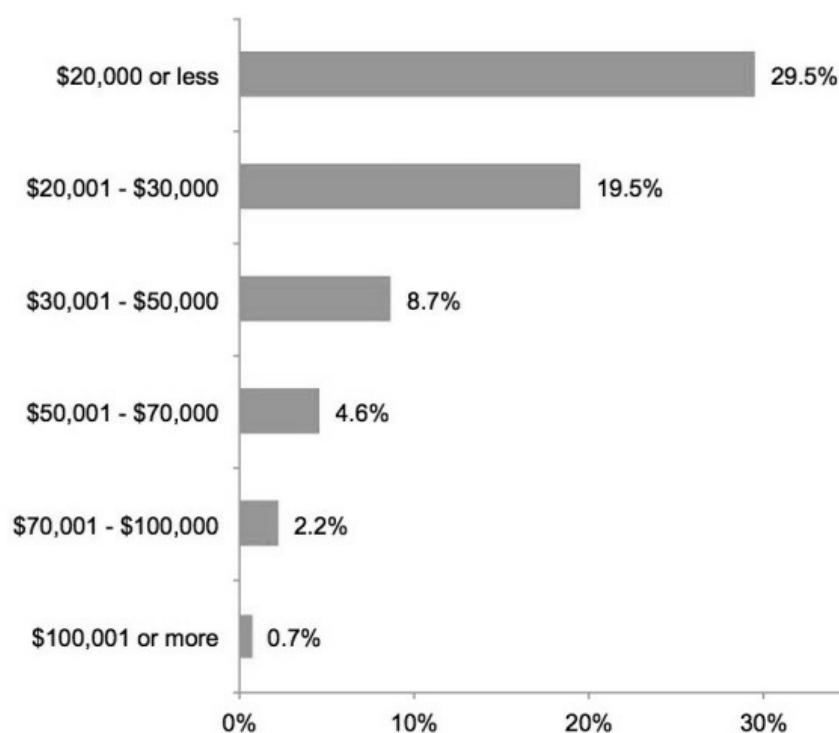
I want to focus on three specific aspects of transport inequality. The first is cars. Due to a set of choices that we made over the last 60 years, Auckland has a transport system that is heavily reliant upon cars. It's possible to get most places in the

city, most of the time, by car, but not necessarily by public transport or cycling.

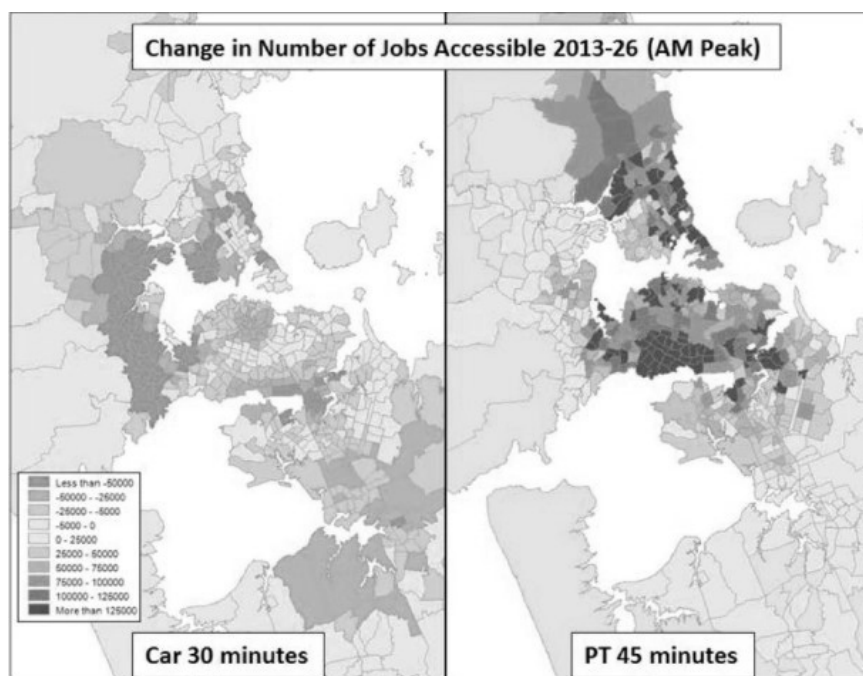
This has its benefits, except when everyone's trying to drive at the same time or when there's a crash on the motorway, but they aren't evenly distributed. Census data shows that over one in five low-income Auckland households lack access to a car, meaning that they face significant difficulties in reaching destinations.

This is linked to unequal levels of accessibility to jobs and education from different parts of the city. This measure reflects the combination of where people live and work and how easy it is to get around. The Auckland Transport Alignment Project recently looked at this, as shown in the maps below. Over the next decade, working-class suburbs in West and South Auckland are expected to experience declining accessibility to jobs by car and, with the exception of areas around Auckland's rail network, relatively modest gains in public transport accessibility.

**Share of Auckland households that own no cars, grouped by household income, Census 2013**







This reflects the scarcity of non-car transport options in these parts of the city. Where it exists, Auckland's rapid transit system plays a key role in supporting accessibility by all modes. Busways and rail lines speed up public transport journeys, benefitting those who do not own cars. And by giving people the option to get out of the car if the roads are stuffed, they also moderate traffic congestion. But unless we take measures to reduce the scarcity of rapid transit options, these benefits will not reach all Aucklanders.

Finally, there are serious inequalities in health outcomes related to physical activity. Although obesity rates are an imperfect proxy for physical activity, they point to some serious differences in the accessibility and safety of walking and cycling options between different parts of the city. In North and Central Auckland, obesity rates are below the national average. In South Auckland, obesity rates are 26% higher than the national average for adults, and 70% higher for children.

People living in places where it is easier and safer to walk and cycle tend to walk and cycle more. In addition to saving people money, this can reduce the burden of preventable illnesses for individuals and communities. But this will not

happen if walkable neighbourhoods and safe cycling facilities remain in scarce supply.

## Abundant access for Aucklanders

To fix the inequities in Auckland's transport system, we must move from scarcity of transport choices to an abundance of choices. We can build a city that has what public transport expert Jarrett Walker calls "abundant access", in which:

The greatest possible number of jobs and other destinations are located within 30 minutes one way travel time of the greatest possible number of residents.<sup>3</sup>

Jarrett's concept of abundant access focuses on accessibility via public transport, but similar goals could be outlined for all transport modes. For instance, we should also aim to ensure that:

- It is safe for all Aucklanders to walk to school or the shops
- People of all ages, from 8 to 80, feel comfortable cycling to a range of destinations.

Delivering abundant access will not necessarily be easy. It will require

us to make some hard choices about how to deploy scarce resources, ranging from transport budgets to road space. It may require some capital to be reallocated towards infrastructure development. But it is possible, and, if we want Auckland to become a more equitable city, it will be essential.

## Space for new politics?

This article has been primarily focused on policy, not politics. However, it is often the case that new forms of politics are needed to deliver policy change.

As I'm an economist rather than a political organiser, I won't pretend to know how to catalyse new political movements. That being said, I hope that this article has offered some useful suggestions for shaping a progressive political agenda. First, it's important to recognise that many of Auckland's social and spatial inequalities are driven by scarcity – in particular, scarcity of housing, especially in desirable locations, and transport choices.

Second, we must react to scarcity by building bridges, not walls. In an urban context, progressive politics must respond to scarcity by delivering abundance. If people don't have places to live, build more homes.

If people can't get around, provide them with abundant access. In a city, we are all citizens – we have a right to the place where we live. ■

<sup>1</sup> <http://transportblog.co.nz/2016/07/29/developer-profits-and-capital-gains-on-housing/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://transportblog.co.nz/2016/08/31/zoning-reform-is-the-unitary-plan-any-good-2-of-n/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://humantransit.org/2013/03/abundant-access-a-map-of-the-key-transit-choices.html>

# Is zero-fares public transport the answer? A debate

## YES: Roger Fowler

Seniors can show the way to get Auckland moving towards a modern, expanded public transport network for Auckland, that is fully integrated, publicly owned and free at the point of use. Why not extend the SuperGold Card to open up zero-fare public transit for all citizens?

### A fresh approach – a total modal shift

The serious traffic congestion, chronic fossil-fuel wastage and pollution issues that plague Auckland can only get worse, as currently over 825 cars are added onto Auckland roads every week. It's time to consider a truly sustainable public transport policy that offers a fresh approach to city-wide mobility for all. A total modal shift is required that upholds public transport as a vital public service, like education, libraries, health services, sanitation and water supplies.

To achieve this goal, we need big new incentives to change the entrenched mind-set of dependency on private cars and oil. Although recent improvements have increased patronage, we need a radical incentive to effectively get the bulk of commuters out of our cars and into public transport and end Auckland's costly daily gridlock.

The SuperGold Card has had a dramatic effect in getting seniors out and about on free public transport.

Instead of creating obstacles, Auckland Transport should expand the Super Gold Card success to open up free public transport to all citizens – not just restricted to senior citizens. The solution is free transit for all passengers at the point of use – with the immense benefits and costs shared by all.

Rather than building more and more extravagant motorways, tunnels and flyovers that merely encourage more traffic congestion, the Government should urgently divert funds from big roading projects into efficient user-friendly public transport and decent walking and cycling facilities.

### Overseas cities adopting free public transit

Free public transport is not a new concept. Many cities overseas are adopting, or seriously considering, fare-free transit, coupled with a raft of new citizen-focused initiatives, as an innovative solution that can be appropriate for New Zealand cities, especially Auckland.

In January 2013, the capital of Estonia, Tallinn, introduced free public transport for all residents, which has already brought about dramatically positive changes in city life, increasing mobility while seriously cutting congestion and pollution levels. The city's mayor

reports that the experiment has 'surpassed all expectations' with passenger numbers up by 10% and cars on the streets reduced by 15% in just 3 months. Other Estonian cities are likely to follow suit.

Free buses introduced last year in central Chengdu, the provincial capital of Sichuan province in South West China, have resulted in similar stunning transformations. The formerly hopelessly-gridlocked Belgium city of Hasselt has flourished since 1997 when their visionary council stopped extravagant road building plans and embraced free buses and bicycles, and tree-lined boulevards. Not only did ridership soar by 1300%, but rates went down! However, a subsequent more conservative council later introduced some modest fares.

Citizens of many other smaller cities in France (such as Aubagne, and Chateauroux) and the USA (notably Chapel Hill and Clemson) have also benefitted from free public transport. Other large cities in Europe, such as Brussels, Leipzig in Germany, and Riga (capital of Latvia) are considering introducing free transit. The city of Zory in Poland introduced unconditional free public transport in May 2014, and hosted the 2014 International Conference on Free Public Transport. The municipality of Avesta in Sweden hosted last year's FPT forum.



Kuala Lumpur and Penang cities have expansive popular free bus services. Bucharest, the capital city of Romania, is currently planning to introduce free public transport. Many smaller cities in France provide free bus services. Cities offer targeted free transit, such as for children under 14 in Barcelona, and on CBD routes in a large number of cities, such as Perth and Sydney. Big cities such as Paris and Los Angeles often enforce free public transport and ban cars on days when pollution reaches dangerously high levels.

## Public transport – a vital public service

User-friendly free transit has also proved to foster social cohesion, inclusiveness and civic responsibility.

Public transport should be publicly owned and operated as an important public service, just like libraries and rubbish collection – it would be ridiculous to expect householders to pay on the spot for each rubbish bag collected.

## Zero fares are just part of a whole new modal mind-set that needs to be phased in.

But it's not just a matter of making public transit fare-free. The cities that have successfully adopted free public transport insist that there needs to be a whole new emphasis and modal mind-set change: firstly, there needs to be a planned transition period to allow for building up the increased stock of modern zero-emission buses, trams, trains and ferries and expanded infrastructure. A promotional campaign could keep people fully informed about the changes and benefits, and change the prevailing car-dependent mindset into a realization that decent, well-patronised public transport is best for all. Removing all the obstacles

(such as fares, proximity, accessibility, inefficiencies etc.) will help change engrained attitudes from "I'd be crazy to go by bus" into "I'd be crazy to go by car."

## A 'step-by- step' transition period

This transition period could coincide with a phased fare reduction to, say, a flat \$1 per trip, and a moratorium on all big roading projects. Free transit could be introduced in stages, firstly for disabled passengers and school students to join the senior citizens, followed by tertiary students who show ID, then lastly all other adult riders. This gradual process would allow for the infrastructure to be developed throughout the city at a reasonable pace over, say, a three or four-year period.

## Developing new improved infrastructure

The new people-focused mobility infrastructure should include:

- Greatly expanded fleets of buses, ferries, trams and train carriages. It is estimated that this would need to be gradually increased up to about three or four times the current capacity to adequately cater for the increased demand.

- Extended bus lanes and bus-only traffic signals on all bus routes,

- Expanded networks of safe cycle ways, more open green spaces, walkways and car-free boulevards and malls,

- Expanded park and ride facilities, and feeder services at all key nodal points.

- Ample passenger shelters at each stop, that effectively protect people from the weather,

- Limit inner city parking facilities.

- New redesigned and direct bus and tram routes should be colour-coded, criss-crossing the city and easily linking up for maximum mobility.

- All bus, tram, ferry, light rail and train services and timetables integrated to allow for easy transfer from one mode to another.

- Strategically placed transport information centres offering simple colour-coded route maps, directions and advice.

- All services should be frequent and reliable.

- The introduction of free transit needs to be accompanied by a high-profile promotion of the benefits of the new public transport services.

- Free wifi on all public transport and passenger facilities.

- Clear signage to make public transit easily understood by all. More electronic passenger information signs at bus stops and train stations.

- All services should use no (or low) emission and modern comfortable vehicles that can easily accommodate wheelchairs, shopping bags and cycles.

- Wide doors, with lowered ramps, at front and rear for easy and rapid alighting and egress for all.

- 'Public transport ambassadors' engaged to assist passengers and deter anti-social behaviour – similar to Māori Wardens. This will free up the drivers to focus on getting their passengers to their destinations safely.

- All public transport services should operate 24/7. This will allow for the safe travel of increasing numbers

of late night/early morning workers and nightclub patrons etc., and a practical alternative to drink-driving.

- Mini-buses to link isolated suburban pockets to the main public transport network.
- Like many European cities, free bicycles could be available for loan at strategic locations. Hasselt in Belgium even offers free bike maintenance depots.
- Reintroduce trams along main arterial routes – modern trams are comfortable, and easily accessible.
- Rail should be actively encouraged as the main means of transporting the bulk of freight, with expanded facilities. This will get a large number of heavy trucks off the roads and severely cut road maintenance costs. Heavy rail services to the airport and beyond should be urgently installed – with zero fares.

## **How will it be paid for?**

Everybody will share the benefits of a big switch to decent public transport and an end to traffic congestion – so everyone should share the costs, instead of expecting the users of public transport to pay.

Most of the funding could come from diverting the huge government funds earmarked for planned big roading projects, into decent public transport. Road and fuel taxes, inner city parking fees, and selling the extremely expensive fare collecting and ticketing systems. The vast tracts of land already purchased for more roads could be sold, releasing extra funds for public transport. A new tourist 'carbon-footprint' tax could help offset carbon costs and be channelled into the new transit system.

Businesses will be the greatest

benefactors as productivity soars and transport-related costs dramatically drop. Huge fleets of company cars would become unnecessary, and the need for extensive car parking space would be heavily reduced. A differential rates system could be reintroduced, or a special levy on business could be applied.

## **Advantages:**

- Dramatic reduction, or end, of traffic congestion.
- Greatly reduced costs in road maintenance due to less wear and tear.
- Substantial reduction in traffic related pollution levels, noise pollution, road accidents, deaths and injuries.
- Increased fitness with encouragement and confidence due to safer walking and cycling opportunities.
- A big reduction in the massive amount of time and productivity potential lost stuck in traffic each day.
- Huge reduction in associated health costs: respiratory conditions, hospital admissions due to road accidents, stress related illnesses, etc.
- Reduction in 'road rage' incidents; fuel usage, waste and costs; insurance claims and costs.
- The finances and mobility of low-income people will be greatly improved, giving greater access to jobs, health facilities, etc. by removing cost constraints coupled with better services.
- Faster boarding times – no more waiting for each individual transaction.
- Reduce the number of school children currently being dropped off at school by car with expanded free services.
- Surplus taxi drivers can be offered jobs as bus drivers or rail or ferry staff.
- End of assaults on bus drivers who will no longer carry cash boxes.
- Emergency vehicles can get through without traffic congestion problems.
- The increased number of buses and trains will be available to be quickly seconded to rapidly evacuate large numbers of the population in event of an earthquake or other civil emergency.
- Abolish expensive ticketing and fare handling systems – fares only comprise a modest percentage of current income for public transport.
- End all problems of 'fare dodging' and 'over-riding' and disputes over fares. No need for teams of ticket inspectors and punitive measures.
- Public ownership and control will reinforce PT as a vital civic service focused solely on the mobility needs of the public.
- Rates will fall as the city becomes far more user-friendly, mobile and genuinely 'liveable'
- The new innovative free transit system is likely to become a major tourist draw-card – think of Melbourne and its popular trams.
- Auckland could become a world-leading 'liveable city' renowned for transforming chronic gridlock into sensible urban mobility.

**Disadvantages ... well, can YOU think of any?**



## NO: Patrick Reynolds

*(The following is expanded from Twitter comments.)*

The cost of public transport is a very important issue. But is free always the best answer? This is unclear.

There are several problems with the zero-fares option for public transport:

1. Possible **overloading** of services;
2. **Fairness**: it is fair that the user contributes to the costs of service. How much of course matters hugely! Zero fares would mean the capture of public transport services by those more than able to pay (such as myself).
3. **Expansion**: Zero fares would make more sense in a static city which already had great public transport and didn't need to expand. But how would we fund expansion and improvements, such as the City Rail Link?
4. The **quality of service** is likely to plunge without a source of funding. In Auckland, 50% of transit operating expenses are paid by fares, 25% by other road users (through the fuel tax) and 25% by property owners (through rates). Without income from transit users, how will we pay drivers, let alone fund service expansion? Would more taxes for this purpose be likely to be politically acceptable?
5. If people don't pay, they may be less likely to **respect the service**. So possibly, zero fares may lead to more vandalism, more abuse of drivers – the social contract between PT and riders might break down.

The zero-fares argument also assumes that the poor are time rich, which is not true. Those working two or more jobs might be more

interested in a fast, high-quality public transport experience than a zero-fares option.

What all working people really need is great, safe, efficient, reliable service. On the model of the current SuperGold scheme it would better to target fare relief to the young, the old, and the poor, and to offer discounts for off-peak travel to shift the load from overburdened peak-hour services. ■



# Economic apartheid: the ongoing ethnic cleansing of Auckland

Daphne Lawless

In any country with a past as part of one of the Western empires, you can't sensibly talk about any part of society without discussing the ongoing legacy of white supremacy and racism. Urban geography and the right to the city is no exception. The most famous examples of racism in urban geography are of course the legalised segregation carried out under the names of apartheid in South Africa or Jim Crow in the United States, where white and non-white peoples were separated by law and by force. But the destruction of the Pasefika communities of historic central Auckland by a combination of motorway madness, economic segregation and gentrification is also an example of how capitalist racism feeds into how our cities are built – and how the Pākehā middle-class have benefited at the expense of other sectors of society.

## Pasefika migration

Aotearoa began its colonial era with the forcible removal of tangata whenua from most of their land by the armed forces of the British Empire. For a long time, the cities were more or less restricted to Pākehā of various social classes, due to an informal "white New Zealand" immigration policy which was almost as effective as Australia's more formal version.<sup>4</sup> This changed after the Second World War, when the economic boom meant suddenly

New Zealand's industries were short of labour. This not only led to the migration of younger generations of Māori to the cities looking for work, but government and business also targeted the peoples of the Pacific Islands – Samoa, Tonga, Fiji, and elsewhere. Generally speaking, the jobs these new migrants were those that "a self-respecting British immigrant or Kiwi wasn't prepared to do" – unskilled and low-skilled jobs in expanding manufacturing industries and on the wharves.<sup>5</sup> The Pasefika population of New Zealand climbed from 3600 in 1951, to nearly 94,000 in 1981, and was 266,000 at the 2006 Census.<sup>6</sup>

At that stage in history Auckland's industry was clustered around the central city, and cars were a luxury which only the upper classes had access to. At the time, the well-to-do population of Auckland were using this new mobility to head towards the new-built "outer" suburbs of the slowly spreading urban sprawl. So, the suburbs that the new Pasefika migrants settled in were the working-class suburbs of those days – Grey Lynn, Ponsonby, Newton, Herne Bay, Freemans Bay, Parnell – which were within easy tram or bus distance of inner-city factories. These suburbs offered "cheap rental housing, much of it consisting of run-down old villas and workers' cottages with no hot water or inside toilet."<sup>7</sup>

Someone who's not familiar with Auckland's history might be amazed at that list of suburbs, most of which are now on Auckland's "most overpriced" list. Just recently, Herne Bay's average house price reached a staggering \$2 million. And it's no coincidence that its Pasefika inhabitants are mainly long gone.

## Motorway madness

The Pasefika community of the inner suburbs quickly put down cultural roots which still make their presence felt today. Today's huge Pasefika presence in New Zealand rugby, for example, began with the first all-Samoan rugby team playing for the Parnell and Ponsonby clubs.<sup>8</sup> Many of the churches which were the centrepieces of Pasefika communities, and offered valuable social support to those "fresh off the boat", are still visible in the area.

All this began to change in the mid-1950s, when the first parts of Auckland's motorway network – including the Harbour Bridge – were built. By the mid-1970s, the suburb of Newton – between the Karangahape Road ridge and Mt Eden – had been almost totally destroyed for the creation of the Central Motorway Junction, aka "Spaghetti Junction", the heart of the new motorway network. Meanwhile, half of Freemans Bay was replaced by a motorway connecting the CMJ to



the Harbour Bridge – perhaps a lucky escape for Ponsonby Road, which was an option initially considered for this route.

As Chris Harris says, there was no need for a Central Motorway Junction at all – Adelaide, a city about the same size as Auckland, gets on fine without one.<sup>9</sup> It would have been more efficient from a traffic point of view to build a motorway route from Manukau north around the western end of the Waitemata Harbour, avoiding the urban area altogether – something which will only happen this year with the opening of the “Waterview Connection”. Instead, all northbound traffic was sent over the inadequate Harbour Bridge – and right through what used to be Auckland’s working-class and Pāsefika suburbs. Quite aside from the impacts on these communities, Auckland has paid the price for these short-sighted decisions with decades of traffic congestion and sub-standard public transport.

In 1951, the Government of the time declared that 96 hectares of Freemans Bay was to be “totally cleared and redeveloped”.<sup>10</sup> Originally the plan was to replace the old slum housing with modern high-density developments. But as the 1960s and 1970s wore on, it became clear that the ideology of Auckland’s local and national planners was to clear the

existing working-class communities from the central city altogether, towards peripheral suburbs along the motorway network. From 1976 to 2008, the Pāsefika proportion of Auckland’s inner suburb dwellers fell from 23% to 10%.<sup>11</sup>

## Gentrification

The expansion of the motorway system meant that factories no longer had to be near the CBD to transport goods to and from the wharves. The manufacturing jobs which used to sustain the inner-city Pāsefika community began moving to the city fringe as well, to places such as Penrose or East Tamaki. Understandably, many of those Pāsefika communities displaced by motorway madness followed their work southward – where, it must be said, the new houses being built were usually of higher quality than the old Newton slums.

This new housing was built on what was then the southern fringes of the urban area: Mangere, Ōtara, Papatoetoe, and other areas which were part of what was known (before the “Super-City” amalgamation of Auckland) as Manukau City. Meanwhile, with Newton gutted by the CMJ, Karangahape Road – which used to be its prosperous shopping strip – began to decline. The big department stores and the Pāsefika

churches began to disappear, their place being taken by strip joints and sex work establishments – the origins of “K’ Road”’s reputation as a “red light” district.

But the decay of Newton and Ponsonby was also the beginning of the process of “gentrification” of the city fringe which gave us the million-dollar suburbs of today. Gentrification is “a socio-historic process where rising housing costs, public policy, persistent segregation, and racial animus facilitates the influx of wealthier, mostly white, residents into a particular neighborhood.”<sup>12</sup> Ponsonby and nearby suburbs thus had their Pāsefika population replaced by young Pākehā “who began to buy and renovate the relatively cheap houses available ... to the west of Auckland’s CBD. They have been described as ‘young, socially liberal, tertiary-educated Pākehā’ whose motives went beyond the relatively cheap housing to include a desire for ‘new ways of living’ in an area which had an ethnically diverse population, and a reputation as a centre of counter-cultural lifestyle.”<sup>13</sup>

The “counter-cultural lifestyle” meant, in part, access to inner city nightlife and drugs brought in from the wharves. Notoriously wild-living rock bands such as Dragon or Hello Sailor got their starts on the streets

of (what Dragon called in one of their songs) “Rock’n’Roll Ponsonby”. The gay community – social outcasts at the time – were also a vital part of Ponsonby and K’ Road’s new community.

What happened as the hippie era ended and the Rogernomics era began, though, was very different for the Pasefika and Pākehā populations of inner Auckland. As the long post-war boom ended and unemployment began to rise, suddenly Pasefika labour became surplus to requirements. “Overstayers” on temporary visas who were tolerated while jobs were plenty suddenly became the targets of “dawn raids”. The Polynesian Panthers – inspired by the Black Panther Party in the United States – were founded in Ponsonby and became the spearhead of resistance to this increasing tide of racism.

Meanwhile, as the level of owner-occupiers in inner Auckland increased, renters were squeezed out – there was an increasing level of “discrimination against Pacific people attempting to rent a house and many were forced to relocate to state housing in peripheral suburbs”.<sup>14</sup> Conversely, owner-occupiers who held on until the revival of Auckland’s CBD from the 1990s onwards made massive capital gains as the housing market exploded. A villa in Grey Lynn which might have been available for sale in the mid-80s for something like \$50,000 would fetch something in the range of \$1 million these days. Thus – without even having to move house – the drop-outs and hipsters of the 1970s became the extremely asset-rich upper-middle class dominating Auckland politics today.

## Apartheid

The upshot of all these social changes – caused both by world-wide economic trends and the specific housing and transport decisions

of New Zealand’s and Auckland’s rulers – has been economic and ethnic apartheid. The old inner-city suburbs that survived motorway madness have become extremely valuable and sought-after residences for professionals. While 40 years ago Ponsonby Road was a grimy suburban shopping strip catering to the counter-culture and the remnants of the Pasefika communities, today it is upmarket, glitzy and dominated by privileged Pākehā. (Even the gay community, with the exception of what’s known as the “pink bourgeoisie”, have been largely priced out.) A house that a Samoan wharfie might have lived in in 1975 is now likely to be a million-dollar investment property owned by an older Pākehā person – who might never consider that their unearned wealth is the product of a whole ethnic community being displaced.

Meanwhile, the newer Pasefika suburbs south of the Manukau harbour have become a byword for poverty and social decay – 1970s Ponsonby without the rock’n’roll chic. Auckland’s manufacturing base remains in south-eastern Auckland; but in the modern, de-unionised and deregulated economy, manufacturing jobs are no longer associated with security, income and pride. The area of big employment growth is in technical and communications work – which, inevitably, is increasingly based in the central city and the old inner suburbs.

Chris Harris argues that Auckland’s geography combined with its perpetual transport bottlenecks (signs of the failure of the motorway project) have surrounded the central Auckland isthmus between Avondale and Ōtahuhu with “a kind of moat”, which the inhabitants of South and West Auckland find it very difficult to cross. In the current economy, this means that these communities are “isolated from the opportunities offered by good jobs, which are

mostly in areas they cannot reach because the transport to get there is non-existent, too crowded or too expensive”<sup>15</sup>.

Karlo Mila has the grim figures on what this has meant for the Pasefika communities of Auckland:

72% of Pacific people live in the most deprived neighbourhoods (deciles 8-10) and only 7% in deciles 1-3. 40% of Pacific children live in poverty... A high concentration of the Pacific population is clustered in overcrowded, substandard housing in low-income neighbourhoods...

The creation of concentrated low income neighbourhoods has had social consequences for the people who live in these locales, and particularly for the young people who form their expectations from the world they see around them... One-third of the Pacific population lives in the area that was Manukau City. There, every ward has the lowest level of community resilience possible and the highest community need. Local council surveys show that fewer than half of Manukau City residents feel a sense of pride in the way their city looks and feels...

More than a quarter of Pacific female high school students feel unsafe in their neighbourhoods. A quarter of all students in Manukau City leave school without achieving credits for basic numeracy and literacy... The Pacific population has the highest growth rate of any ethnic group, with 38% of the population under 15 [while] no groups are as unwanted as Pacific and Māori young people.<sup>16</sup>

Although Pasefika people moved from the slums of 1960s Newton in search of a better life, clearly not much has changed – except that privileged white folks no longer



have to pass through their deprived suburbs on the way to the CBD. The workings of the market and government policies have therefore shifted Auckland's working-class Pāsefika community "out of sight and out of mind" of the central-city chattering classes, almost as efficiently as South African or American legal segregation did. Moving social problems away makes it much easier to pretend that poverty, drugs and urban decay are someone else's problem – a particular pathology of a racialised "South Auckland", rather than the outcome of the same social changes which have massively enriched other sections of the population.

Ironically, since many Leftists opposed it, the Auckland "Super City" may help Pāsefika communities to regain some ground. Representatives of South Auckland now once more get a say in the affairs of the parts of town from which their previous generations were excluded.

## Our lessons

The lessons for leftists in this are:

1) Housing and transport are exactly the same issue. Choices about what kind of houses we build intimately reflect the kind of transport we build. Quarter-acre single-dwelling houses sprawling across former farmland go along with motorway madness, and vice-versa. On the other hand, dense housing built around urban centres and places of employment encourages public transport, cycling and walking, and vice-versa.

2) It must be our priority to fight social apartheid. It would certainly be easier to build high-density, eco-friendly housing in the working-class suburbs where land is cheaper. But this will do nothing to help working-class communities break out of their geographical isolation from the central areas of town which

are richer in cultural, educational, and employment opportunities, and will in fact reinforce economic apartheid. Affordable high density housing must be built in the pleasant, liveable, central suburbs, while rapid public transport links must be built to connect these places to outer working-class suburbs, so that all can benefit from the increased wealth and opportunities that the rebirth of central Auckland brings. The City Rail Link taking 10 minutes off the train journey to West Auckland – and also enabling another light or heavy rail link to the airport, connecting Mangere and Onehunga to the CBD – would, as Chris Harris says, "repair part of the broken social contract with south and west Auckland".

3) Likewise, we must fight the stranglehold that the beneficiaries of central Auckland's gentrification have on the politics and development of our city. Daniel Older argues that gentrification is in fact "violence couched in white supremacy... the central act of violence is one of erasure" of working-class communities and their history. In this way, it replicates the colonial expropriation of Aotearoa which set up New Zealand's unequal and racist society in the first place. The asset-rich beneficiaries of this deeply unfair and exploitative process now self-righteously stand against any developments which might re-open the central city to young people and workers. They must be politically defeated.

4) We must also support the actually-existing organisations in the new working-class suburbs – the spiritual descendants in many ways of Ponsonby's Polynesian Panthers. Community groups in Glen Innes have been at the forefront of resisting the dispossession of State house tenants and the forcible gentrification of their suburb; while the "Respect Our Community" coalition, based in Mangere, have not only blocked

a new motorway extension which would have demolished many houses, but are leading the fight against turning ancestral Māori lands at Ihumatao into more housing sprawl. Older argues that a central narrative of gentrification is a "discourse that imagines neighborhoods of color as pathological and criminal, necessitating outside intervention for the good of all." But initiatives like the above prove that working-class communities in notorious "South Auckland" can fight back. ■

<sup>4</sup> Misa, Tapu. "Auckland: The Pacific comes to Auckland". New Zealand Herald, 2010 August 27. Available at: [http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c\\_id=1&objectid=10667079](http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10667079)

<sup>5</sup> Mila, Karlo. "Only one deck", in Rashbrooke, Max (ed.) *Inequality: A New Zealand Crisis*. Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2013. pp. 91-101

<sup>6</sup> Misa, op. cit.

<sup>7</sup> Misa, op. cit.

<sup>8</sup> Misa, op. cit.

<sup>9</sup> Harris, Chris. "A divided Auckland?" in Rashbrooke, Max (ed.) *Inequality: A New Zealand Crisis*. Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2013. pp. 102-4.

<sup>10</sup> Friesen, Wardlow. "The demographic transformation of inner-city Auckland." *New Zealand Population Review*, 2009, 35:55-74.

<sup>11</sup> Friesen, op. cit.

<sup>12</sup> Older, Daniel José. "Gentrification's insidious violence: The truth about American cities". *Salon*. Available at: [http://www.salon.com/2014/04/08/gentrifications\\_insidious\\_violence\\_the\\_truth\\_about\\_american\\_cities/](http://www.salon.com/2014/04/08/gentrifications_insidious_violence_the_truth_about_american_cities/)

<sup>13</sup> Friesen, op. cit.

<sup>14</sup> Friesen, op. cit.

<sup>15</sup> Harris, op. cit.

<sup>16</sup> Mila, op. cit.

# Accessibility and why it matters

Patricia Hall

All humans have fundamental needs to which they have a right:

- Food and clean water
- Warm, dry shelter
- Connection
- Meaningful contribution (paid or otherwise)
- Access to affordable, appropriate healthcare

We are also diverse and have various specific needs, which are no less important and should also be human rights. Historically those with higher basic needs, whether based on physical or sensory disability, gender, or being part of a minority culture within a larger more dominant society, have had to pay dearly and fight hard to have these needs met. Some may even have been institutionalised or otherwise isolated from society as too difficult, and sadly this still happens for some people.

However, if we turn this around from placing the onus on those who are “different” and instead focus on designing our world and cities to cater for all people, we begin to make lives more liveable for all of us. Statistics tell us that currently twenty percent of the New Zealand population is living with some form of disability. Even if we ourselves are not in that twenty percent, we do not live in isolation - all of us have friends, whanau, and benefit from a more

accessible world.

To give an example of how this is applied: improving access for wheelchair users also makes public (and private) places more accessible to parents with small children in pushchairs, to those with varying degrees of mobility issues, older people, and those with chronic illnesses. Accessibility means we can all enjoy the same spaces together, irrespective of these needs. Note also that not everyone’s needs are visible. For example, someone may be entitled to use an accessible carparking space for reasons not immediately apparent to a stranger, and have to explain or defend this need.

Much attention has been drawn in the media, particularly in the United States, around restrooms and gender. Providing clean and accessible gender neutral restroom facilities benefits not only those on the trans\* spectrum, but also provides for those who may need to assist someone else (who may, or may not be the same gender as their carer) with their toileting needs. This may be parents with small children, or an aging family member who requires assistance. We should repeat here not every access need is a visible one, and we should not judge those around us on face value. A person who appears able-bodied may require the use of a disabled restroom due to a hidden issue; perhaps Crohn’s disease or another digestive problem. Again, people should not feel they must explain to a stranger their personal

reasons for needing such a facility.

Accessibility matters not just in our real-world spaces, but also virtual and digital communities. As our lives become increasingly technologically assisted it is important that these are accessible too. Videos that are subtitled, alternative texts provided for images, and the ability for text to be converted to audible resources all help a wider audience of us to interact with each other and with the digital world.

Accessibility matters. It is no longer good enough to simply add a ramp to an existing structure, or add in a hearing loop, and say we have ticked the boxes and no longer need to think about being an accessible space. Retroactively creating accessibility to existing spaces is expensive. However, when we specifically design with accessibility in mind, it ultimately creates a more liveable world for all of us.

With rebuilding after the Christchurch earthquakes, and in Auckland as it evolves in the era of the Unitary Plan, we have the chance to think about how we will develop our city as it grows. We in New Zealand have the opportunity to ensure that our future spaces for living, working and enjoying our leisure time are fully accessible to all people and their needs. ■



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# Pro-migrant group standing in next election

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## A Fightback Report

Newly formed political group Migrant and Refugee Rights Campaign (MARRC) has announced they will run a candidate in Wellington Central. Gayaal Iddamalgoda, a legal organiser for FIRST Union, will stand for migrant and refugee rights.

"I am standing to challenge the major parties on migrant and refugee rights," explains Gayaal.

"Many New Zealanders are rightly horrified by Donald Trump's attacks on Muslim and Mexican migrants," Gayaal continues. "But we can't be so naïve as to think that couldn't happen here."

"Political parties here also use migrants as a political football."

"According to Ipsos polls, 47% of New Zealanders recognise that migrants are a net economic benefit to New Zealand," adds Gayaal. "But, unfortunately, the opposition parties do not consistently stand up for migrants."

MARRC is seeking an endorsement of its kaupapa by political parties, particularly Labour and the Greens. "We have contacted Labour and the Greens and asked for their support, but have not received any reply," says Gayaal.

MARRC is critical of the use of migrant workers as cheap labour. "We demand full rights for migrant workers," Gayaal explains. "That

includes a Living Wage, in addition to all the basic rights afforded to New Zealand citizens."

MARRC also supports the call to double the refugee quota. "Our current quota is pitiful," according to Gayaal.

MARRC will hold a screening of *The Zookeeper's Wife* as a fundraiser for Gayaal's campaign, on May the 4<sup>th</sup>, 6:30pm at Lighthouse Cinema Wellington. ■

*Fightback is part of the Migrant and Refugee Rights Campaign. To support us, please email [marrc.aotearoa@gmail.com](mailto:marrc.aotearoa@gmail.com) to join the mailing list, or visit [marrc.org.nz](http://marrc.org.nz) to find out more.*





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# We need to stand with Niki, because she is standing up for you

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Vanessa Cole

Elderly tenant loela 'Niki' Rauti has made headlines for refusing to be moved from her house on Taniwha Street, Glen Innes. While she has received support from many people, the backlash from some commentators have tried to derail her struggle by framing her as selfish for holding on to a three- bedroom home during a housing crisis. Niki's struggle is not an individual struggle, but a struggle of people against the processes of capital accumulation and its manifestation in the state-led gentrification of Tāmaki.

In *The New Zealand Experiment*, Jane Kelsey shows New Zealand's historical habit of blindly following economic ideas that had never been trialled elsewhere in the world. The Tāmaki experiment is much the

same – adopting urban planning and privatisation which have failed internationally. The transfer of 2,800 state houses in Tāmaki (Panmure, Point England and Glen Innes) to the Tāmaki Redevelopment Company (TRC) is privatisation by stealth. The insidious language used by the TRC frames this transfer as urban 'regeneration' – a grand project which will see the building of more homes and the revitalising of a community which embodies the problems associated with the geographical concentration of poverty.

The experiment in Tāmaki is a well-orchestrated campaign. The reality of these policies, without the spin, is mass privatisation of state housing, the displacement of the poor through state-led gentrification processes,

and destruction of working class communities by private developers into a desirable and attractive landscape for an incoming middle-class. If Tāmaki was the experiment for the rest of Auckland, and for the rest of New Zealand, then it is a failed experiment. While the redevelopment has received public attention and criticism, the discourses and myths produced by the Government are powerful in justifying and dampening the violence of dispossession.

Paula Bennett promised that freeing up public land by removing state homes in Tāmaki and building more houses will help alleviate the exorbitant increases in house prices and build more houses for those in need. Yes, more houses have been built, but providing public land



to private developers has led to exploding unaffordability. The median land values in Glen Innes, one of the first areas to be redeveloped, have increased from \$400,000 to nearly 1 million since the redevelopment begun in 2012.

The housing market in Tāmaki demonstrates that increasing supply and density of housing does not necessitate affordability. One reason is that our existing affordable housing (state housing) is being replaced by a large amount of private housing, and property developers are not interested in the reduced profits of “affordability.” State housing once functioned to stabilise the housing market in particular areas, meaning that surrounding rental properties were cheaper. Very few people will be able to rent an affordable house in Tāmaki once this project is completed, particularly if landlords continue to capitalise on the increasing land values in the area.

As for the argument that “mixed-tenure communities” will provide better access to resources for the poor and solve the social problems facing unevenly developed communities. Most of the international research suggests that this new urban planning logic does the complete opposite. The logic of social mixing is built on classist ideas of middle-class neighbours teaching the poor how to behave and providing aspiration for mobility. This is a logic which ignores the economic processes which occur when capital moves into low-income communities, processes which lead to displacement and social cleansing.

Developers in Tāmaki have to build a certain proportion of social and affordable houses as part of the deal of buying and accessing cheap public land. Their main goal, however, is to profit from speculating on land value increases. While the TRC have promised tenants that

they can remain in the area, this was a reluctant concession following years of community resistance, and does not account for other forms of eviction through the Social Housing Reform Programme (SHRP) which begun in 2013.

The establishment of a social housing market by means of transferring state housing to Community Housing Providers (CHPs) is occurring under the rhetoric of efficiency. Tāmaki Regeneration, a company set up to regenerate and redevelop Tāmaki, is now one of these new ‘social’ landlords, given 2,800 households to manage. As part of the company, Tāmaki Housing Limited Partnership manages the tenancies, and Tāmaki Regeneration Limited are in charge of redevelopment. The Government will argue that this is not privatisation as the TRC is currently owned by the New Zealand Government (29.5% Bill English, 29.5% Nick Smith) and Auckland Council (41%). The TRC, however, was set up in the interim period to manage the properties and the tenancies. Soon, however, the tenancies will be transferred to various different social housing providers and the land will eventually be sold to developers and investors to build the mixed tenure housing.

If we look to the UK, this process of transferring management of public housing stock to private organisations lead in many cases to privatisation. Without sufficient subsidies to support management of properties, private developers are the only organisations that can withstand the costs. The Salvation Army have already backed down from taking on state housing stock for this very reason. The most concerning issue here is the foreshadowing of large scale privatisation in which the private market is held as the sole supplier of the basic human right to housing.

While we are promised to reap the benefits and efficiencies of privatisation, history has shown that the private market does not provide affordable and secure housing for the working class and unemployed.

Housing is a right, and an essential material need. To sell it off to private developers or transfer it to private housing providers is to commodify something that should be for living. When Niki is standing up against the redevelopment of her home, she is standing up against the economic processes by which capital dispossesses the poor for the profit of the rich. We need to resist the narratives of the ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ poor, and fight for the right of all to affordable, secure and public housing. We need to unite to dispel the myths of regeneration and to fight the historical and continual dispossession of people by capital. We need to stand with Niki, because she is standing up for you. ■

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# Avondale: gentrification amid poverty

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Bronwen Beechey

Avondale is a suburb about 12 kilometres southwest of the Auckland CBD. The area, known before colonization as Te Whau, was important to Maori as a transport route, as it is the narrowest point of the isthmus and canoes could be transported between the Waitemata and Manukau harbours. It was an important source of food, particularly kai moana (seafood), tuna (eel) and birds such as kuaka (godwit) and kereru (native pidgeon).

The 2013 census showed that the Avondale population was made up of 22% Pasefika peoples, while 35% of Avondale residents identified their ethnicity as Asian. Avondale had an average unemployment rate of 12.1%, compared with 8.1 percent for all of Auckland. For people aged 15 years and over, the median income in Avondale was \$23,067, compared with a median of \$29,600 for all of Auckland. 23.6 percent of families in Avondale were one parent with children families, while sole parents with children made up 18.4 percent of families for Auckland. 51.5 percent of

people in Avondale owned their own home, compared with 61.5 percent for all of Auckland.

Avondale town centre reflects the economic and ethnic makeup of the suburb, with shops selling traditional Pacific Island clothing and food, cheap bakeries and takeaways (for a couple of months in 2016, Avondale had the dubious distinction of the highest number of D-rated food outlets in Auckland), and several two-dollar shops, interspersed with empty shops. Since 2012 there have been no banks, and no post office. Sports facilities include the Avondale Racecourse, which is also the venue for the popular Avondale Sunday Market. There are few other entertainment venues; and the Community Centre is only partly usable due to dampness and mould issues.

As Auckland housing prices soar, Avondale has become more desirable for property owners with its proximity to the city and affordability compared to inner city suburbs. The average house price has risen steadily from

around \$400,000 in 2012 to \$753,200 in March 2016, and the average weekly rent from just over \$350 to \$480 per week in the same period.

Avondale was also selected by Auckland Council as a Special Housing Area (SHA), with a mix of social and private housing developments to take place.

However, the requirement for private developments to include a proportion of “affordable” housing was later dropped. While these developments will bring improvements to the area, there is also the danger of gentrification pushing out lower-income residents, as has happened in suburbs such as Ponsonby and Grey Lynn. As houses – particularly the desirable 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century villas – are sold and renovated, the original fence or hedge is often replaced by what some locals refer to as “gentrification fences” – high, solid walls. These suggest that the new residents appreciate the local character and diversity of Avondale, but only as long as it doesn’t get too close.



*Mural created and painted by local Avondale residents for the 2016 Whau Arts Festival, on an empty building site in the main shopping strip.*

## Community development

Community development, according to the United Nations, is “a process where community members come together to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems.” It can encompass anything from local residents organising a petition to have a pedestrian crossing installed near their children’s school, to protests against major developments such as the proposed water treatment plant in the outer Auckland suburb of Oratia.

Australian academic Jim Ife, in his book *Community Development in an Uncertain World*, sees community development as “the process of establishing, or re-establishing, structures of human community within which new, or sometimes old but forgotten, ways of relating, organising social life and meeting human need become possible.” Community development principles emphasise sustainability, diversity, empowerment and valuing local knowledge and skills.

There are several community action organisations operating in Avondale, including Avondale

Community Action, the TYLA (Turn Your Life Around) Trust which focuses on “at-risk” youth, and Whau The People, an arts collective which organises the annual Whau Arts Festival and other events. ACA and TYLA are both involved in a government-funded community project called “Together We Are Avondale”, which is designed to “encourage locals to participate and engage more in our community”.

One issue that has caused concern is groups of young people huffing glue in public spaces, including on the grounds of Avondale Primary School. A workshop involving Together We Are Avondale and other local groups identified the need for upgrading some of the spaces to make them safer. Other strategies include stopping local retailers selling glue to minors, and making contact with the young people to provide them with appropriate help.

This example illustrates the strengths and weaknesses of community development as currently practiced. The fact that a community response was initiated to deal with the issue, rather than just relying on police or bodies such as CYFS, is

commendable. However, the issues that cause young people to huff in the first place are not addressed. This is largely due to the limitations that government funding places on community organisations, and perhaps also to a lack of vision in some organisations.

Jim Ife refers to the tension in community work between the achievement of immediate goals and the ultimate vision of a better society. He argues that maintaining a balance between the two is vital: “immediate actions cannot be justified unless they are compatible with the ultimate vision, and the ultimate vision cannot be justified unless it relates to people’s immediate day-to-day concerns.”

Although it has its own character, Avondale is representative of many other communities around New Zealand which are struggling with the legacy of neo-liberal cutbacks. Community-building and activism provide an opportunity to engage with the people most affected and promote an alternative vision of a fair and just society. ■





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# Sprawl still the plan in post-quake Christchurch

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Byron Clark

Six years on from the earthquake that levelled much of the city, the population of Christchurch has almost returned to pre-quake levels. As with everywhere in New Zealand, house prices are up, but rents have fallen slightly from the high point of the city's accommodation crisis.

Construction is now more common than destruction. In fact, much of the recent population growth has been driven by skilled tradespeople moving to Christchurch from overseas and elsewhere in New Zealand to participate in the rebuild.

The story of Greater Christchurch is different, however. When people moved out of the city following the quakes, many didn't move very far. While Christchurch's population declined, the surrounding districts

of Waimakariri and Selwyn swelled. These continue to be popular destinations for people searching for relatively cheaper homes than those offered in the city.

In the past year, the population of the Waimakariri District grew 3.7 per cent, and that of Selwyn District 6.6 per cent. This compares to 1.9% for Christchurch City. Even before the earthquake, almost half the population from these districts either side of the city commuted to work in Christchurch. The northern motorway into Christchurch now sees 50,000 cars a day – 10,000 more than before the earthquakes.

Waimakariri is now the South Island's third largest population centre, bigger than Nelson and Invercargill. However, the regional

council (Environment Canterbury, aka ECan) has been ineffectual at providing transport options. In 2014 commuter rail was ruled out as the \$10 million price tag was seen as too expensive. Yet currently, \$900 million worth of motorway projects are happening around Christchurch.

Despite some bus priority lanes in the northern suburb of Belfast, public transport commuting from North Canterbury is no quicker than travelling in a private motor vehicle. Buses are an option mainly used by those without the option of a car.

Meanwhile, the new commuter town of Pegasus, promoted as a place where one could "live where you play", was a spectacular flop. The development shifted hands from one property developer to another while

those who bought homes there never got the promised amenities such as a supermarket – let alone the yacht club and equestrian centre that were promoted in advertising for the town.

Now a new development, Ravenswood, is about to begin construction. Larger but less ambitious than Pegasus, artists' conceptions of Ravenswood depict – refreshingly honestly – enormous car parks surrounding the buildings in the commercial area. Anchor tenants have already been found: a supermarket, a petrol station and a fast food outlet. Ravenswood in its current conception depicts an anachronistic model of suburban living that is not sustainable in the twenty-first century.

In the south-west of the city, while commuting times might be shorter (thanks in part to an already completed motorway project) the same suburban story is told. Writing in *The Press*, Philip Matthews describes the new subdivisions of former farmland:

"Wigram Skies and other new suburbs tell you that the near future will still be car based. These are not pedestrian suburbs. You rarely see anyone walking. The monotony of housing is broken by occasional playgrounds and childcare centres but there are no corner stores and few community facilities. No churches. Shopping is the communal activity."

The rebuild of the central city has looked more positive. With a new bus station and cycle lanes separated from the roads, Christchurch is starting to look like a modern city should. However, most central city apartment complexes and town houses have been priced out of reach for all but the wealthy, with some priced as high as \$1.5 million.

The boarding houses and bedsits

that once provided shelter to the inner-city poor are gone, and social housing hasn't filled the gap. The City Council had 2649 council homes for rent at the start of September 2010, but only 2292 available for rent as of 11th December 2016, according to figures from an Official Information Act request obtained by the State Housing Action Network. Meanwhile, central government plans to sell 2,500 state houses in the city. ■



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# “Wellington, here we come” – The Māori Land March(1975) as a claim on urban space

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Ani White

*Te Matakite o Aotearoa: The Māori Land March* is a documentary depicting the Māori Land March of 1975, which was a key moment in the ‘Māori Renaissance’ of the 1970s. A growing, youthful urban Māori movement fused with existing rural forms of Māori organisation to organise the March, which contested urban rhythms imposed by colonisation and capitalism, asserting an indigenous rhythm through unified ways of vocalising and walking in urban space. The narrative of this documentary presents unity between rural and urban Māori, and thereby contests colonial ownership of urban spaces. My analysis draws on European theorisation of urban space, while seeking to supplement its limitations with indigenous and Kaupapa Māori theory.

## The city and indigeneity

Urban indigeneity poses a contradiction in colonial mythology. Colonial projects in Aotearoa/ New Zealand and in other settler nations such as Canada and Australia have depicted indigeneity as essentially rural, thereby casting urban indigeneity as “inauthentic”. However, this image erases both the reality that most indigenous people live in cities, and that cities are built on appropriated indigenous land.

More fundamentally, the call for indigenous sovereignty always has implications for urban space that are often neglected:

“Most cities are located on sites traditionally used by Indigenous peoples... The creation of Indigenous “homelands” outside of cities is in itself a colonial invention. Moreover, for many indigenous peoples, ancestral homelands are not contained in the small parcels of land found in reserves, reservations, and rural Māori and rural Aboriginal Australian settlements; rather, they are the larger territories that include contemporary urban settlements” (*Peters and Andersen 7-8*)

Indigenous claims could thus be considered in terms of *the right to the city*, a slogan coined by French Marxist Henri Lefebvre. Lefebvre suggested that “the city” as object is always falling away, leaving “the urban” as a surrounding space. He would later begin to more broadly theorise the role of the class struggle in “the production of space,” not simply the city. However, Marxist geographer David Harvey suggests that while Lefebvre’s intellectual legacy may be important to theorising ‘the right to the city,’ actually-existing urban social movements offer more explanatory value. Lefebvre himself similarly

contends that “only social force,” in the form of “groups, social classes and class fractions,” can solve the problems of urban space.

The core of Kaupapa Māori has been defined as “the affirmation and legitimisation of being Māori”. Although Kaupapa Māori theory has only recently been codified in academic work, its heritage is older, particularly drawing on oral history. I will therefore refer to both the filmed verbal accounts of participants in the march, and more recent Kaupapa Māori scholarship where relevant. Alongside centring the verbal speech acts of movement participants, I will also refer to Michel de Certeau’s discussion of walking as a kind of ‘speech act’ that defines and is defined by urban environments.

## Historical context

Young urban Māori played a key role in the ‘Renaissance’ of the 1970s, undermining attempts at assimilation. Before World War II, 90% of Māori lived in rural spaces. The post-war era saw substantial Māori urbanisation, driven partly by state policy, both to meet labour needs and in an attempt at assimilation. However, despite this attempt at assimilation, the majority of urban Māori continued to identify with their tribal heritage. By the



1970s, “radical urban indigeneity” increasingly threatened the state as it mingled with other radical urban currents. Historian Aroha Harris explains the significance of younger, urban, educated Māori layers in the indigenous movement of the 1970s:

“Amongst the many critics [of ongoing land grabs] was a group of Māori university students and graduates, which evolved a few years later into Ngā Tamatoa. Members were young, educated, and urbanised; some were unionists, others experienced political activists. They were leaders and social commentators recently come-of-age, the new face of Māori activism. For Ngā Tamatoa, Māori affairs policy provided some immediate catalysts for modern Māori protest. Although many of the issues they raised were long-standing, like *te reo* and the Treaty of Waitangi, the reasons for protest and resistance were contemporary, like the politics of integration and marginalisation in the cities. Ngā Tamatoa also heralded a new analysis of the Māori experience of colonisation; one that understood racism and how it worked”.

The production of *Te Matakite o Aotearoa: The Māori Land March* was enabled in part by these new urban groups; Ngā Tamatoa, the Polynesian Panther Party and New Perspectives on Race (a group involving both Māori and Pākehā) are credited as key coordinators of the film, among others. The Māori Land March of 1975 was also a high point for unity between these younger urban formations and “older rural traditionalists”. New urban groups such as Ngā Tamatoa combined forces with older Māori collectives including the Māori Council, uniting to frame the Treaty of Waitangi as a tool for historical redress.

Cultural critic Brendan Hokowhitu contends that, although won through unified struggle, the ratification of

the Treaty of Waitangi Act (1975) and the Waitangi Tribunal came to reproduce exclusion of urban Māori as “inauthentic”. Arguably this is a case of the limited “decolonisation” seen in many settler-colonial polities over the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which saw a transition from classically assimilationist colonisation to a more sophisticated “incorporation by recognition,” leaving underlying power relations largely intact.

The decades-long tension between sections of the Māori sovereignty movement, produced partly through negotiation and compromise with the Crown, was prefigured in the aftermath of the 1975 Māori Land March. Differences between young militants Ngā Tamatoa and respected elder Dame Whina Cooper emerged immediately after the march, with Ngā Tamatoa staying at parliament after Cooper had advised them to disperse. Despite this thorny aftermath, the march itself presented a unified front, and Harris concludes that “its dignity has made a permanent impression on New Zealand’s history”. Contention between sections of the movement is not presented in the documentary *Te Matakite o Aotearoa: The Māori Land March*, which concludes with the march arriving at parliament and presenting its demands.

## Talking out and talking in

The documentary *Te Matakite o Aotearoa: The Māori Land March* “talks out” to Pākehā audiences as part of a strategy for historical redress. Barry Barclay, a Ngāti Apa filmmaker and Kaupapa Māori theorist, considers filmmaking in terms of *hui*, or conversation based on principles of mutual respect. Barclay suggests a distinction between “talking out” to Pākehā audiences and “talking in” among Māori. This perhaps chimes with Australian Aboriginal (Yiman) sociologist and film critic Marcia Langton’s suggestion that ‘Aboriginality’ in film can be defined

by three overlapping fields of interaction – colonial stereotypes of Aboriginality, dialogue between Aboriginal cultures, and dialogue between Aborigines and non-Aborigines. I suggest that while the Māori Land March was enabled by “talking in” among Māori – between different *iwi*, between young and old, between urban and rural Māori – the documentary and march are also acts of “talking out” to Pākehā. As a Pākehā viewer, I seek to engage in the dialogical space created by the film.

On an institutional level, the documentary was produced for TV2, with a majority-Pākehā audience. Within the film, use of *Te Reo Māori* is usually repeated in English (especially in interviews and narration). This implies an audience that speaks English and not *Te Reo Māori* – not necessarily a Pākehā audience, but certainly including Pākehā. At the beginning of the film, prominent activist Eva Rickards explains the significance of *whenua* to Māori people, again implying an audience that may not be versed in *Te Ao Māori*, yet grounding the story in that world. In an interview after the outset of the march, leading Ngā Tamatoa member Tama Poata explains that he considers Pākehā awareness to be one of the movement’s key goals:

“Something extraordinary has to be done about [land theft], to make the bulk of New Zealanders aware of the situation because there’s not enough of them aware in my opinion what the real facts are related to Māori land.”

The film presents a united front to audiences; between rural and urban Māori, younger and older, men and women, between *iwi*, and with the minority of Pākehā who participated. In interviews, movement leaders emphasise the unity of the march, particularly across generational lines. Tama Poata underlines that “old and young” have come together for the march, describing the sense of unity as “extraordinary.” Esteemed

kuia and movement leader Whina Cooper later echoes this sentiment, explaining in an interview before the final stretch of the hikoi:

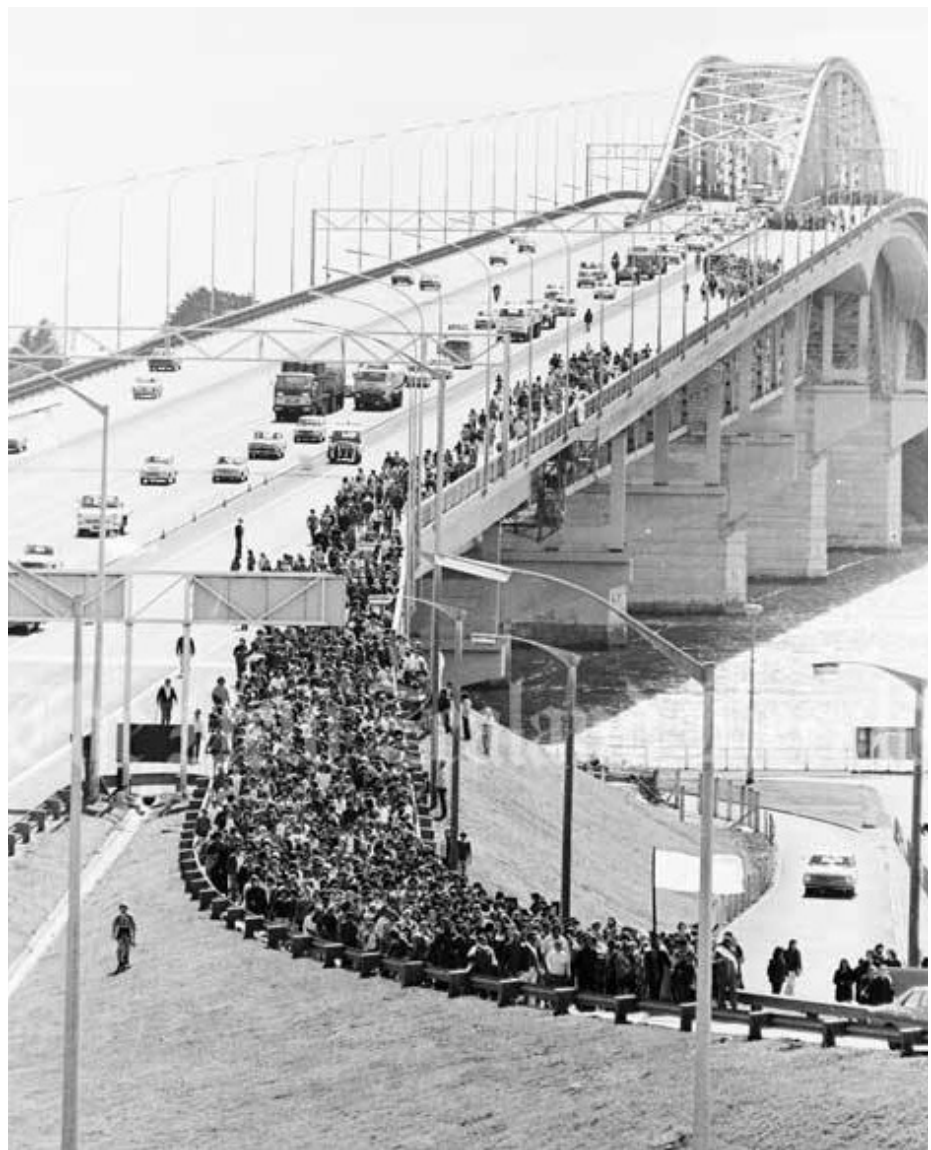
"Our young people are changing. They're finding out now that to go alone without the support of the old people, they won't reach the goal that they want to reach. So now they're following the old people around to get all the knowledge of the past, so as to stand as a kind of an instrument for the future."

In a more incidental way, footage of meetings shows the cooperation between various actors necessary to organise this month-long hikoi. Practical affairs – allocation of vehicles, medical care for people with blisters or injuries – are delegated in a deliberative way acknowledging varying knowledges, skills and needs. Tama Poata also mentions in an interview that men are doing the dishes, acknowledging the division of unpaid labour necessary for a unified collective feat on this scale. The community forged by the hikoi could be considered a form of kaupapa whānau, a family forged out of common aims and outlook, not necessarily or solely out of kinship ties.

## Walking as speech

The combination of verbal accounts and walking as a unified 'speech act' contests colonial arrangements of urban space and time. De Certeau suggests that walking "follows" place names, both mobilised by the names and investing them with new meaning.

Early in the documentary, after marchers set out from Northernmost marae Te Hāpua, a kuia declares "Wellington, here we come." In a sense Wellington, as a centre of colonial power, both hails and is hailed by the marchers, a form of karanga. Their hikoi follows and reshapes the possibilities of



Wellington, as an urban and civic centre.

Lefebvre argues that urban rhythms can only be understood with reference to historical and natural rhythms. This is intended as a "poetic" approach as well as a "scientific" method. Rhythm-analysis of *Te Matakite o Aotearoa: The Māori Land March* reveals an interplay of natural, social, economic and urban rhythms, with the march setting a unified social rhythm that ultimately intervenes in urban spatial and temporal practices. Early in the film, a poem by Hone Tuwhare narrates the internal world of a marcher. Although this marcher is presumably Hone Tuwhare himself, with the poem containing biographical details relevant to his life, the particular embodies more general shared concerns. A number of significant,

mostly slower rhythms run through the visual and aural elements; the rhythm of Tuwhare's poetry, rhythms of the seasons and weather, the pace of aging, and crucially the rhythm of walking, a simultaneous rhythm that expresses social unity. Natural and social rhythms are interlinked, both at a measured pace. These rhythms exceed the urban, even the human individual – as the opening narration notes, "Whatungarongaro he tangata, toi tu te whenua; man comes and goes, the land is permanent."

Despite this sense of slower interlinked natural and historic rhythms, there is also a more immediate urban economic insecurity to the poem, mentioning fears that Tuwhare may lose his flat in Dunedin. This worry of the everyday, the particular, the personal, manifests more general concerns. As de Certeau



mentions, “to walk is to lack a place”, and in this case the commitment to participate in a month-long (economically ‘unproductive’) walk requires taking a risk in terms of economic security. Partly this is an urban concern, one of the necessary social “waste products” (poverty, insecurity) of the profit system, yet this insecurity also results from a more generalised alienation of land from the people. In other words this alienation is not solely urban or rural. Tuwhare refers to “all the different people worrying differently”, and underlines the togetherness of shared concerns. Marchers who stay the distance also have the comfort of shared homes, stopping off at marae each night, a prominent example of the “circular migration” that can allow urban indigenous people to retain connections with rural indigenous communities.

## Unity and urban space

This conscious togetherness allows the marchers to contest urban spatio-temporality effectively; through Auckland to Wellington. In what has become a definitive image of the Māori Land March, thousands of

marchers cross the Auckland Harbour Bridge. This image is arguably so definitive *because* it contests urban space, placing a claim on a notable urban landmark. In the documentary, the camera follows cars first, clear embodiments of urban rhythm, until the march passes through the background. Cars continue to dominate the foreground for a few shots (although waiata become more audible than cars), before the film moves in closer to the march, and finally cuts to a more widely photographed and circulated genre of angles on this historic moment; long shots facing back toward the marchers as they stream off the bridge in the foreground. Although the marchers are not blocking traffic, instead using the footpath, they eclipse the stream of cars, even dwarfing the bridge from certain angles. Urban codes of space and time are transformed, inverted, if only temporarily; Māori primacy is clear.

Ngāti Whātua leader Joe Hawke, who led the march across the harbour bridge, explains in a filmed interview that the bridge was built on Ngāti Whātua land, and the iwi never received compensation. Soon after explaining the significance of this

action for his iwi, Hawke explains the significance of the march more broadly, commenting that

“this is the first time I have ever seen our Māori people in some way become a unified voice.”

The significance of the march is both in its display of indigenous unity and its claim on urban space. When the hikoi reaches Wellington, they march on the motorway, their unified social rhythm slowing the flow of traffic, urban rhythms interrupted through collective intervention. The motorway sequence begins with fixed aerial shots, narrated first by a Radio New Zealand commentator and then by Tama Poata, before moving in closer for a handheld interview. This movement in position is comparable to de Certeau’s ironic fears about the methodological “fall” from an elevated position of knowledge to the apparently unknowing space amongst the crowd, the move from “voyeurs” to “walkers”. However, the film clearly locates cosmopolitan knowledge among the crowd. Tama Poata discusses international indigenous struggles in Australia, the ‘Third World’ and the USA, finally asserting



unity in diversity and dispossession:

"We vary in some things but basically the struggle is the same, those that have and those that have not."

As the march enters the city, the camera joins, walking with the hikoī up Lambton Quay. Finally, the marchers enter parliament hailed by a karanga, vocalisation and walking again setting an indigenous rhythm in urban space. Without necessarily dichotomising urban rhythms against indigenous rhythms, this action interrupts colonial capitalist configuration of urban space and time. The film concludes with iwi leader Joe Cooper reading the "Memorial of Right," signed by tribal elders, to parliament. Although these concluding formal demands do not advance an explicit programme for urban transformation, the march re-occupies urban space, a tactic that poses the question of ownership in the production of space. The formal demands are also more expansive and inclusive than what was ultimately implemented, including a "national referendum" of Māori for any changes to land rights.

## Conclusion

The 1975 Māori Land March was a historic moment of Māori unity; between iwi, youth and elders, urban and rural Māori. As a speech act, a form of "talking out" to Pākehā, the Land March interrupted rhythms imposed by colonisation and capitalism, asserting a unified indigenous rhythm through collective

ways of vocalising and walking in urban space. The narrative thrust of the march (and the documentary film) presents unity between rural and urban Māori, contesting colonial ownership of urban spaces.

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Poem:

# The New Zealand Land March on Wellington

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Hone Tuwhare

What will I wear?  
What can I afford to wear?  
And will my landlord keep my flat for me in Dunedin?  
This long walk: what a hell of a thing.

I need a haversack.  
Who will lend me one?  
I might have to carry my gear in a sugar-bag  
with flax tied to the bottom corners: no sweat.

But I need a raincoat.  
Who will trust me with one in the immense time of Spring  
when showers bless the earth, eh?

I am old. Already wrinkles  
spread inexorably: inching, inching.  
They're not all of them laughter-lines.  
Agh, what a hell of a thing.

But it won't be a lonely walk.  
People all around and mostly young:  
from blue-brown with more added right on up to off-white?  
Jesus, how self conscious can you get.

Like man, I only want to last the distance, right?  
Yeah: and all the different people worrying  
differently and separately  
about the decision and the action of commitment  
they each have taken to grab the burning but elusive star together.



And together not knowing what lies  
at the end of the star's reach.

Together, not knowing  
whether they will get a punch in the face  
at the end of the road,  
or, with much pain learn that it is just the beginning...

My feet are beginning to ache already.  
The cracks on my Māori feet are beginning to widen:  
my blood turned on.  
Do not laugh.

Laugh only when the blisters fade  
with the jaded politicians and their cunning.

Laugh only when the small spies soft-pies pie-eyed freckled ladies  
and their mafia-men with dark glasses are dug out like  
bed-bugs from among us.

Be watchful, watchful...

I need a haversack.  
Who will lend me one?  
I need a raincoat.

Who will trust me in a time of Spring  
when flowers clamour for the yellow and the blue,  
the red the green of the living earth?

What a good time to take a walk.

HEPETEMA 14 - OKETOPA 17. 1975





